

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FOREIGN ECONOMIC POLICY TOWARD AFRICA

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1. REFTEL PRESENTS COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS IN AFRICA AS WELL AS PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO RESOLVING THESE PROBLEMS. AN INTEGRATED LARGE SCALE PROGRAM ENCOMPASSING ALL THE APPROACHES MENTIONED WOULD BE OPTIMUM (ALTHOUGH NOT NECESSARILY COST EFFICIENT), BUT THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE GIVEN LIMITED MANPOWER AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES.

2. EVEN GIVEN ADEQUATE RESOURCES, DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS IS SUBJECT TO COOPERATION AND/OR THE POLITICAL WILL OF THE RECIPIENT COUNTRY. PROGRAMMED DEVELOPMENT IS A JOINT VENTURE WHICH CANNOT BE VERY EFFECTIVE UNLESS THERE IS REAL COOPERATION BETWEEN DONORS AND RECIPIENTS. THE MORE SOPHISTICATED OR INVOLVED THE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT, THE GREATER AND MORE WIDESPREAD THE CO-OPERATION MUST BE IF THE PROJECT IS TO BE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED.

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3. THE EMERGING NATURE OF MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES COMPOUND THE DIFFICULTIES INHERENT IN COMPLETING OR CARRYING ON ASSISTANCE PROJECTS. ETHIOPIA IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE IN OTHER COUNTRIES AND CAN HAPPEN AGAIN. THE ADVENT OF A NEW REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT IN ADDIS ABABA HAS BROUGHT

ABOUT CHANGES IN THE PERSONNEL, DIRECTION AND PRIORITIES ASSOCIATED WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. WHILE THE NEW DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS MAY OR MAY NOT BE BETTER THAN THE OLD ONES, THE REAL LOSS IS FOUND IN THE START - STOP EFFECT PRODUCED. FOR MANY PROGRAMS: THE DEVELOPMENT ADVANTAGES ALREADY GAINED ARE LOST COMPLETELY IF THE PROGRAM IS ABBREVIATED.

4. IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING THE EMBASSY BELIEVES MORE ATTENTION TO INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS -- IN LINE WITH REFTEL PARAGRAPH 7(1) -- IN THE AREAS OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION IS WARRANTED. THESE PROJECTS ARE GENERALLY OF A CLOSED-END NATURE WHICH, ONCE BEGUN, ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO CHANGE OR HALT EVEN IF A NEW GOVERNMENT EMERGES; CONSEQUENTLY, THE START - STOP EFFECT IS MORE LIKELY TO BE PRECLUDED. FURTHERMORE, THIS AREA OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN AFRICA IS POLITICALLY POSITIVE; IT IS FULLY IN TUNE WITH THE UN DECADE OF TRANSPORTATION IN AFRICA. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THIS AREA APPEARS TO BE THE SINE QUA NON UPON WHICH VIRTUALLY ALL LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT DEPENDS. ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS SUCH AS THE ROMANS AND INCAS WERE BASED UPON AN EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION/COMMUNICATION NETWORK, AND EVEN THE WILD WEST OF THE U.S. WAS TAMED AND DEVELOPED ONLY AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF AN EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION/COMMUNICATION SYSTEM.
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5. IN ETHIOPIA THE NEED FOR AN IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION NETWORK IS SEEN AS A TOP PRIORITY BY BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE DONORS. THE JUDICIOUS PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION OF SUCH A SYSTEM -- INCLUDING RAILWAYS AS WELL AS ROADWAYS -- WOULD OPEN UP NEW AGRICULTURAL LAND, BRING INTO THE MARKET ECONOMY THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION NOW EXCLUDED, PROMOTE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, PROMOTE RESETTLEMENT AWAY FROM DISEASE RIDDEN AND POOR AGRICULTURAL AREAS, ETC. SUCH PROJECTS ARE VITAL IN DEVELOPING MEANS TO MEET LONG TERM BASIC HUMAN NEEDS IN ETHIOPIA, THEREBY DOING AWAY WITH THE NECESSITY OF ANNUAL SUPPLICATIONS TO FOREIGN DONORS FOR RELIEF CONTRIBUTIONS TO MEET MINIMUM BHN REQUIREMENTS.
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